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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

Letter dated 4 February 1992 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The United States, as an administering Power, recognizes its responsibilities under Chapter XI of the Charter of the United Nations and will continue to fulfil those responsibilities. In this era of a new-found spirit of cooperation in the United Nations, the United States has been willing to continue to cooperate with decolonization committees in the United Nations so long as it has been clear that the committees are adopting a more constructive approach. As the number of remaining non-self-governing territories diminishes, it is increasingly important that United Nations decolonization committees pay more attention to those territories' particular evolution towards self-government.

We regret, however, that despite the best efforts of the United States and others, the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples has not yet fully set aside those practices of the past which focused on an outmoded agenda in favour of new approaches aimed at addressing the specific needs of the few remaining non-self-governing territories.

This year, the Special Committee again forwarded to the Fourth Committee a number of resolutions which contained outmoded, irrelevant and repetitive rhetoric and again took up issues which were inappropriate for Special Committee consideration - South Africa, apartheid, military activities in United States territories, Puerto Rico and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. While the United States is pleased that the Fourth Committee took the first steps this year towards changing those resolutions, we continue to note with sorrow and concern the Special Committee's determination to adhere to an outdated approach.

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It is with this in mind that the United States has decided after careful thought to suspend its cooperation with the Special Committee until it takes the steps needed to bring its work in line with the current focus and spirit of the United Nations. This decision will not have any impact on my Government's continuing cooperation with you, Mr. President, or with the General Assembly. We believe that the Special Committee should move tangibly towards discussing specific issues important both to the remaining territories and the administering States in place of, not in addition to, issues that are not relevant to those territories and which are, in any event, fully treated elsewhere by the United Nations. The United States desires an environment in which the specific concerns of the remaining territories can be considered in an open, balanced and objective manner. We seek an environment in which the administering States will be able to cooperate fully with all United Nations decolonization committees.

The United States urges members of the Special Committee this year to reform its work and to address as a matter of priority those issues of significance to the remaining territories. We look forward to reviewing the Committee's work in the hope that the common ground which was the basis for the acceptance of Chapter XI of the Charter can be restored in the decolonization committee.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as an official document of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly under the item entitled "Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples".

(Signed) Thomas R. PICKERING